

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01 ACDA-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5090

SECDEF WASHDC

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MSC WASHDC

INFO AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY BONN

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

CINCUSAFE

CDR 4TH TRANS BDE OBERURSEL GER

CDR USATTGE RADM NE/ARUIR-TM//

DIA WASHDC

USMISSION NATO

USNMR SHAPE

CO MSC ELM BREMERHAVEN GER

C O N F I D E N T I A L BRUSSELS 08847

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MMOL, MARR, NATO, BE, US

SUBJECT: RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS

REF: BRUSSELS 7580, AUG. 26, 1975 DTG 261700Z

SUMMARY: SOME "GIVE" HAS DEVELOPED IN PROPOSED IMPOSITION OF
RESTRICTIONS ON USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS. BELGIAN
GOVERNMENT HAS SUGGESTED A POSSIBLE WAY OUT WHICH WE RECOMMEND
BE EXAMINED. END SUMMARY.

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1. FOREIGN MINISTRY CALLED MEETING SEPT. 30 OF REPS FROM

MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE, COMMUNICATIONS AND TRANSPORT AS WELL AS MAYOR OF BRUGES (VAN MAELE), BRUGES ALDERMAN FOR HARBOR AFFAIRS (TRAEN) AND POST AUTHORITY. CONSENSUS OF MEETING WAS THAT PROBLEM COULD BE RESOLVED TO SATISFACTION OF ALL PARTIES, INCLUDING USG. SAFETY OF LOCAL POPULATION AND OF PORT FACILITIES WAS IDENTIFIED AS SOLE REASON BEHIND PROPOSED REDUCTIONS IN USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS. THIS CONSIDERATION WAS RAISED ON ITS OWN MERITS, WITHOUT ANY IDEOLOGICAL BIAS, THOUGH PERSONALITY CONFLICTS BETWEEN LOCAL OFFICIALS PROBABLY PLAYED A ROLE IN LOCAL DECISION. BRUGES REPS, ENCOURAGED BY BELGIAN GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS, WOULD LIKE TO:

(A) FIND WAY TO OVERCOME THEIR SAFETY CONCERNS;

(B) CONTINUE PRESENT LEVEL OF EMPLOYMENT ENGAGED IN MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS AND CONTINUE TO RECEIVE PORT FEES FROM MUNITIONS SHIPS; AND (C) FIND WAY TO INCREASE USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR CARGOES OTHER THAN MUNITIONS. IN THIS RESPECT, THEY ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN HANDLING CONTAINERIZED SHIPMENTS.

2. FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHICH WILL REMAIN POINT OF CONTACT ON THIS ISSUE IN ORDER TO AVOID LOCAL PERSONALITY CONFLICTS IN BRUGES, ACCEPTED OUR SUGGESTION REFTEL THAT US MUNITIONS HANDLING SAFETY EXPERTS DISCUSS SAFETY ASPECTS WITH ZEEBRUGGE SAFETY OFFICIALS. FOREIGN MINISTRY SUGGESTED FURTHER THAT US OFFICIALS NOT BE LIMITED TO SAFETY EXPERTS, BUT ALSO INCLUDE SHIPPING OFFICIALS WITH SUFFICIENT AUTHORITY TO DISCUSS: (A) POSSIBLE SUPPLEMENTARY USG USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR NON-MUNITIONS CARGOES, INCLUDING CONTAINERIZED SHIPMENTS; AND (?) SCHEDULING OF SHIPMENTS TO AVOID CONGESTION SUCH AS TOOK PLACE EARLY THIS SUMMER WHEN SEVEN MUNITIONS SHIPS WERE SIMULTANEOUSLY IN ZEEBRUGGE. POSSIBLY MUNITIONS SHIPMENTS COULD BE SCHEDULED ONLY FOR THE NON-TOURIST SEASON.

3. WE ENDORSE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S TCTICAL SUGGESTION IN PARA 2 ABOVE. WE CANNOT, OF COURSE, COMMENT ON FEASIBILITY OF PROPOSAL TO OFFER INCREASED USG USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR CARGOES OTHER THEN MUNITIONS. OBVIOUSLY, ANY SUCH INCREASED USE SHOULD BE LINKED TO RESCISION OF PROPOSED MUNITIONS REDUCTIONS, ASSUMING THAT LOCAL SAFETY FEARS ARE NOT BORNE OUT AFTER
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ON-THE-SPOT EXAMINATION BY US SAFETY EXPERTS.

4. THE FOLLOWING PERSONNEL SUPPORT AND EXPERTISE IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO BEST PRESENT THE USG POSITIONS IN MEETING WITH THE BELGIAN AUTHORITIES.

(A) USA AND USAF AMMO SAFETY EXPERT WHO CAN DISCUSS PREPARATION, LOADING, STORAGE (SHIPBOARD), AND OFFLOADING OF ALL

TYPES OF SMMO SHIPPED THROUGH THE PORT OF ZEEBRUGGE ABOARD U.S. CHARTERS. THIS PRESENTATION MUST EMPHASIZE THE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS TAKEN AT ALL ECHELONS, AND ALL THE SPECIAL STEPS TAKEN TO INSURE THAT SAFETY IS OUR MAJOR CONCERN. IT WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL IF VISUAL AIDS COULD BE USED TO SUPPORT PRESENTATION. NO REFERENCE SHOULD BE MADE TO CEP (BLAST) EFFECTS NOR SHOULD DIAGRAMS BE PRESENTED SHOWING BLAST EFFECTS WITHIN THE PORT OF ZEEBRUGGE UNLESS THEY WOULD PROVE FAVORABLE TO THE USG POSITION, HOWEVER, PRESENTER MUST BE FULLY KNOWLEDGEABLE OF SUCH EFFECTS AND BE ABLE TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS.

(B) MSC REPRESENTATIVE WHO CAN DISCUSS A TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR USING THE PORT OF ZEEBRUGGE ON A 9 TO 10 MONTHS BASIS, POSSIBLY ELIMINATING THE PEAK TOURIST MONTHS OF JULY AND AUG; IF BELGIANS RAISE THAT CONCERN. ADDITIONALLY A POSITIVE DISCUSSION CONCERNING THE POSSIBLE USG USE OF ZEEBRUGGE FOR CARGOES OTHER THAN AMMO WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON THE CONTAINER FACILITY WOULD BE EXTREMELY HELPFUL.

(C) A LAWYER QUALIFIED TO DISCUSS RAMIFICATIONS RESULTING FROM AMMO EXPLOSIONS, TO INCLUDE SETTLEMENTS WITH FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS SHOULD BELGIANS RAISE THIS ISSUE. THIS IS NECESSARY IN ORDER TO ALLEVIATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FEARS CONCERNING ASSUMPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY IN THE EVENT OF AN EXPLOSION. REQUEST THAT NAMES OF PARTICIPANTS BE PROVIDED, AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, SO THAT THEY CAN BE PASSED TO BELGIAN AUTHORITIES AND A DATE IN TURN CAN BE ESTABLISHED FOR A FORMAL MEETING. AS 25 NOV 75 IS THE IMPLEMENTATION DATE FOR THE NEW AMMO RESTRICTIONS IN ZEEBRUGGE, A MEETING SHOULD BE CONVENED AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE.

5. WE FURTHER WANT TO STRESS THAT ANY CONTACTS WITH ANY LEVEL OF BELGIAN OFFICIALS ON THESE ISSUES MUST BE CHanneled BY EMBASSY ALONE THROUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. IN SITUATION SOMEWHAT AKIN
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TO THAT IN "JAWS" ALL BELGIAN OFFICIALS WISH TO MAINTAIN UTMOST DISCRETION ON ENTIRE SUBJECT. ADDRESSEES SHOULD NOTE THAT ZEEBRUGGE IS LOCATED IN THE CENTER OF THE BELGIAN COAST'S TOURIST RESORTS. FIRESTONE

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